

# **How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks**

60-Minute Module Series

## **PERFORMANCE REVIEWS** **Training Guide**

**TRANSPARENCIES**

**National Park Service  
Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



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# Evaluation

# **Learning Objectives**

- The process for the volunteer performance review
- Purposes, benefits and barriers to instituting volunteer performance reviews
- Suggested procedures and tools
- Potential outcomes of performance reviews

# Key Concepts

## **Concept 1**

Performance reviews provide an opportunity for constructive feedback between the person who assigns work and the person who performs it.

## **Concept 2**

Volunteer performance reviews offer numerous benefits to volunteers and to the parks they serve.

## **Concept 3**

At the heart of a good volunteer performance review is a shared understanding of job expectations and outcomes.

## **Concept 4**

Outcomes from volunteer performance reviews can range from “applause” to dismissal — by either the VIP supervisor or by the volunteer.

# **Essential Elements of Volunteer Performance Reviews**

- Volunteers learn about review system when they first start working
- Mutual feedback is key
- Performance reviews are based on previously agreed upon job description, goals, etc.
- No surprises

# **Essential Elements of Volunteer Performance Reviews (cont.)**

- The process can be formal or informal depending on park's culture
- Gradually invite current volunteers to participate, starting with a self-assessment
- Schedule a specific time or it will continually be put off!

# **Benefits of Volunteer Performance Reviews**

- A way to tell volunteers they are important and held accountable
- Volunteers want success and feedback
- A chance to express appreciation to volunteers
- Opportunity for re-negotiating working agreement



# **Benefits of Volunteer Performance Reviews**

## **(cont.)**

- Plan for ways to improve volunteer performance in the future (e.g., training)
- Volunteers can express concerns and “escape” an unfavorable situation
- Supervisor can share concerns and dismiss, if warranted.

# **Barriers to Volunteer Performance Reviews**

1. “Our paid staff doesn’t receive performance reviews”
2. “We have no policies on volunteer performance reviews”
3. “Current volunteers are resisting the idea”

# **Volunteer Performance Reviews**

## **Before the Session:**

- Have the volunteer fill out self-assessment
- Review volunteer's job description, goals, etc.
- Do an evaluation on job expectations versus performance

# **Volunteer Performance Review**

## **During the Session:**

- Review job expectations together
- Share positive feedback and appreciation
- Have volunteer share self-assessment and assessment of agency support
- Assess volunteer's performance
- Discuss barriers to success for volunteer
- Discuss future plans for volunteer

# **Volunteer Performance Review**

## **After the Session:**

- Prepare a signed report for volunteer's file
- Follow up on action plans or agreements

# **Possible Reasons for Low Volunteer Productivity/Morale**

- Boredom, too much routine
- Discontent, personality differences
- Idleness, fluctuating workload, insufficient staff
- Lack of interest in the work
- Ill-defined assignments
- Inadequate supervision/training
- Misunderstanding of park policies

# **Possible Reasons for Low Volunteer Productivity/Morale (con't.)**

- Resentment, overload, unrealistic deadlines
- Poor communication
- Emotional stress and personal difficulties
- Erratic participation
- Lack of appreciation by staff
- Staff and park changes
- Staff resistance to utilizing volunteers

# **Dismissal of Volunteers**

- Volunteer initiated
- Park initiated



# Exit Interview Outcomes

- Tracking
- Recognizing and thanking volunteers
- Locating problems within district, division, etc., in the park
- Detecting recruitment problems (e.g., wrong person)
- Apologizing for any problem caused by agency (keep good PR in community)
- Providing closure to the relationship

# **Volunteer Dismissal**

- Park policies on dismissal, grievance, etc., should be explained during orientation
- Most often, investigate violations before dismissal
- Handle with fairness and diplomacy.  
Don't apologize!
- Notify staff that volunteer will no longer be working at the park